

JULY 20, 1976

VIKING ONE--SOME REFLECTIONS

ANNCR:

NEWS ANALYST FRED GALVAN HAS THESE THOUGHTS ON THE
LANDING OF VIKING ONE ON THE PLANET MARS.

VOICE:

WHEN THE STRANGE-LOOKING MACHINE SETTLED ON THE SURFACE
OF THE RED PLANET, IT REALIZED THE DREAMS OF MANY THOUSANDS OF
SCIENTISTS, TECHNICIANS AND OTHERS WHO HAD WORKED FOR YEARS
TOWARD THAT MOMENT. IT TOOK VIKING ONE ALMOST A YEAR TO TRAVEL
THE DISTANCE BETWEEN OUR PLANET AND MARS. AND SINCE IT WENT
INTO ORBIT--AND NOW FROM THE SURFACE--VIKING'S CAMERAS HAVE
BEEN BUSY SENDING BACK TO EARTH PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE PLANET.
AND IT IS THIS PHASE THAT MILLIONS OF MEN AND WOMEN HAVE BEEN
WAITING FOR.

FOR MANY YEARS DREAMERS AMONG US HAVE ENVISIONED ON MARS A
THRIVING CIVILIZATION OF CREATURES NOT UNLIKE OURSELVES. BUT
THE PHOTOGRAPHS AND SCIENTIFIC DATA GATHERED BY INSTRUMENTS
ABOARD VIKING AND OTHER ROBOT SATELLITES ORBITING MARS HAVE
EFFECTIVELY EXPLODED THOSE DREAMS. WHAT THOSE PICTURES AND DATA
HAVE SHOWN IS AN EXTREMELY RUGGED, JAGGED SURFACE AND AN
ATMOSPHERE AND CLIMATE THAT MAKE HUMAN LIFE AS WE KNOW IT
IMPOSSIBLE ON MARS.

THE VIKING SOFT LANDING IS THE FIRST BY ANY SUCH ROBOT
VEHICLE. THE SOVIET UNION HAS TRIED UNSUCCESSFULLY TO LAND
SUCH ROBOTS THREE TIMES. BUT ITS MARS ORBITING MISSIONS,
LIKE THOSE OF EARLIER AMERICAN MISSIONS SUCH AS THE MARINER
FLIGHTS, WHICH SENT BACK SEVEN THOUSAND PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE
PLANET, HELPED PAVE THE WAY FOR VIKING'S SUCCESSFUL LANDING.

THE STARTLINGLY CLEAR PICTURES TAKEN BY VIKING ONE FROM ORBIT SUGGEST THAT AT SOME TIME THERE WAS WATER ON MARS. SCIENTISTS SAY THERE MAY STILL BE SOME TRAPPED BELOW THE PLANET'S SURFACE. IF THAT IS SO, THERE IS A CHANCE FOR SOME FORM OF LIFE TO EXIST--ALTHOUGH PROBABLY VERY PRIMITIVE. SO THE DATA AND PICTURES THAT VIKING IS SENDING BACK TO US NOW FROM THE PLANET'S SURFACE COULD MARK A NEW CHAPTER IN THE HAUNTING QUESTION THAT MAN HAS ASKED HIMSELF FOR MANY CENTURIES--IS THERE SOME KIND OF LIFE ON ANOTHER PLANET? THE ACTUAL SEARCH FOR THE ANSWER WILL BE UNDERTAKEN BY VIKING ONE IN ABOUT A WEEK. THE INTERVAL BETWEEN NOW AND THEN WILL BE TAKEN UP BY CHECKING OUT ITS DATA-GATHERING SYSTEMS.

(OPT) THE VIKING WAS ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED TO LAND ON JULY FOURTH, AS A GESTURE RELATED TO THIS COUNTRY'S BICENTENNIAL. BUT PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE SITE TENTATIVELY SELECTED SHOWED THAT THE TERRAIN WAS TOO RUGGED FOR A SAFE LANDING. AS THINGS TURNED OUT, THE DATE CHOSEN INSTEAD MARKS ANOTHER SIGNIFICANT ANNIVERSARY--THE SEVENTH SINCE MAN FIRST WALKED ON THE MOON. THAT FEAT BY THE APOLLO ASTRONAUTS ALSO REPRESENTED A DREAM LONG HELD BY HUMAN BEINGS. (END OPT).

MAN HAS LEARNED MUCH FROM THE APOLLO FLIGHTS. BUT THIS VIKING MISSION AND THE SECOND ONE ALREADY ON ITS WAY FOR A LANDING IN SEPTEMBER COULD BROADEN ENORMOUSLY MAN'S KNOWLEDGE OF THE UNIVERSE. THAT IS THE DREAM THAT MOTIVATED THE THOUSANDS OF MEN AND WOMEN INVOLVED IN THE VIKING PROJECT AND SUSTAINED THEM THROUGH SEVEN YEARS OF ARDUOUS WORK. THAT IS WHY THE SCIENTISTS AND TECHNICIANS CONTROLLING THE VIKING MISSION BROKE INTO LOUD CHEERS WHEN IT SENT BACK CONFIRMATION OF ITS SUCCESSFUL LANDING.